

talk with your teen

Talking with your teen about not using alcohol is the first step in prevention. As a parent, you already understand that your relationship with your teen can make a difference.

The guidance you give strengthens the bond you have with your child and helps counter media images that glorify alcohol. It also gives your teenager the tools he or she will need to resist peer pressure to drink. Still, finding the right words to say, and when to say them, can be tough.

Here are some recommended

examples of how to talk with your teenager—and what to say. For additional ideas, please refer to the “Keeping Your Kids Drug-Free” booklet included in this Parent Kit.

What You Can Say

SET THE RULES:

“If you’re at a party where kids are drinking, I want you to call me and I’ll come pick you up.”

“I love you, and I want the best for you, so I don’t want you to use alcohol.”

“I really want you to be healthy and safe, that’s why I don’t want you to use alcohol.”

AVOID RISKY SITUATIONS:

“It’s not OK for you to ride in a car with someone who’s been drinking.”

“I care enough about you to ask you who you are going with and what you are going to do. I’m your [mom/dad] and it’s my job to keep you safe.”

“You know I love you, but I’m your parent not your friend. I won’t put up with you being in a place where kids are drinking.”

ENFORCE THE RULES:

“We’ve talked about how I feel about you using alcohol—and the consequences. You have no (Internet, telephone, car, visit to friends’ houses, etc.) privileges for (time period).”*

“I’m glad you told me, but I’m disappointed that you tried alcohol. I don’t want you to stop talking to me, but I don’t want you to use alcohol again. You do not get (Internet, telephone, car, etc.) privileges for (time period).”

* Discipline is not negotiable and should depend on the severity of the act and whether or not the child lied. It should not exceed three weeks because your child may forget why s/he is being punished. As an alternative suggestion, consider having your child read and discuss articles on the effects of alcohol, or perform community service.

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What Kids Can Say

Give your teenager the means, and the words, they need to say “no” to alcohol. Teens say they prefer quick “one-liners” that allow them to dodge a drink without making a big scene. It will probably work best for your teen to take the lead in thinking of comebacks to drink offers so that he or she will feel comfortable saying them. To get the brain-storming started, here are some simple pressure-busters.

1. “No thanks.”
2. “I don’t feel like it—do you have any soda?”
3. “I don’t drink.”
4. “My parents would kill me.”
5. “Why do you care whether I drink?”
6. “I’d get kicked off the team (club etc.).”

If you hear something you don’t like, try **NOT** to respond with **anger**.

TIPS for listening & talking with your teen

Developing open, trusting communication between you and your child is essential to helping your child avoid alcohol use. If your child feels comfortable talking openly with you, you’ll have a greater chance of guiding him or her toward healthy decision making. Some ways to begin:

Encourage conversation. Encourage your child to talk about whatever interests him or her. Listen without interruption and give your child a chance to teach you something new. Your active listening paves the way for conversations about topics that concern you.

Ask open-ended questions. Encourage your teen to tell you how he or she thinks and feels about the issue you’re discussing. Avoid questions that have a simple “yes” or “no” answer.

Control your emotions. If you hear something you don’t like, try not to respond with anger. Instead, take a few deep breaths and acknowledge your feelings in a constructive way.

Make every conversation a positive experience. Don’t lecture or try to “score points” on your teen by showing how he or she is wrong. If you show respect for your child’s viewpoint, he or she will be more likely to listen to and respect yours.

Want more help?

CALL 1-800-499-0027 (In-State Only) **or 207-287-8900**

TTY: 1-800-215-7604 (In-State Only) **or 207-287-4475** (Special Equipment Needed)

OSA MAINE OFFICE OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE www.maineparents.net